

# 1 Corinthians 1:10-17 PM

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[ 0 : 00 ] Well, our text tonight is about division. I would have loved to have seen a puppet show about division, but Mark decided to talk about salvation instead.

Next week, division. Our text tonight is about division. Specifically, it's about conflict and quarreling in the church amongst Christians.

But it's not just about division and conflict. It's also about unity. And healing. As it unveils for us the power of God and how it can unite all people.

So as we begin, I want you to think in the back of your mind, where do we experience division and conflict in the church today?

You may be new with us today. Maybe you're looking for a new church. You're thinking, oh, I wonder if this church is a great church of peace where there's no conflict. Where do we experience conflict in the church?

[ 1 : 03 ] Even here. And then the second question is, where do we see the power of God at work in his world? In the moments before Jesus was arrested and killed, he prayed.

And amazingly, we have documented what he prayed for. What's amazing about his prayer is it's not for himself, although he knew what was about to happen to him.

His prayer was actually for his followers. Holy Father, Jesus prayed. Keep them in your name, which you have given me, that they may be one, even as we are one.

It's amazing. Jesus knows he's about to be arrested and assaulted and falsely convicted and then immediately tortured unto death. And yet, knowing all of that, he prays not for himself, but for his followers, that they may be one.

The very top of Jesus' mind, right before his horrific death, was the unity of Christians. About 20 years after Jesus prays that prayer for unity, there's a follower of Jesus named Paul, and he goes to a city called Corinth, and he plants a church there.

[ 2 : 23 ] And he lives there for about a year and a half. And as soon as he moves on, he hears reports of division and arguing amongst the Christians in the church in Corinth. He hears about these petty public squabbles, about who their favorite preachers are, church leaders and philosophies.

They are arguing about which pastor is more eloquent or wise and therefore worthy of their devotion and their adoration. And in our text tonight, Paul is writing a letter to these wayward Christians, diagnosing their disunity and inviting them to experience the power of God, to overcome their arguing and fulfill Jesus' prayer that they may be one.

So here's what I want to do. I want to first briefly look at how Paul diagnoses the problem in Corinth. And then I want to look at the solution to the problem.

I want us to discover together the source of God's power and see how it can unite the most diverse of people. So first, the problem, which is outlined for us in verse 10.

Paul writes, I appeal to you, brothers and sisters. Whenever you see brothers in 1 Corinthians, it's an inclusive term. It means everyone. It's not specific to men. So he writes, I appeal to you, brothers and sisters, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree and that there be no divisions among you, but that you may be united in the same mind and the same judgment.

[ 3 : 55 ] What Paul is pleading for is that all the Corinthian Christians would agree. Literally, Paul is asking that they speak the same thing with the same mind and the same judgment.

Because people in the church in Corinth are thinking differently. They're saying different things, thinking different things and having different opinions. They aren't united.

And the disunity has led to quarreling. Look at verse 11. For it's been reported to me by Chloe's people that there's quarreling among you, my brothers and sisters. There's disunity in the church

and it's manifesting itself in arguing.

And what they're arguing about is which Christian leader is their favorite. Look at verse 12. What I mean is that each of you says, I follow Paul, or I follow Apollos, or I follow Aaron, or I follow Peter, or I follow Christ.

I added one there. See, the Corinthian Christians are creating a consumer culture in their church, whereby their leaders, their pastors, are being elevated and they're treating them like they're competitors to each other.

[ 5 : 06 ] They're saying, oh, you like Paul? I'm more of a Peter person. Oh, really? I only come to church when Apollos is preaching. He's brilliant and Paul is so boring.

Oh, really? I follow Jesus. I wonder if you've ever done anything like that. I remember growing up at church, our bulletin said, who was preaching? And I'd get to the pew and I'd sit down and I'd open it and I'd look up the name and I'd go, oh, rats.

Never for you. Never for your name. Never. I won't tell you whose name. See, the unity of the Christian church is being destroyed by Christian tribalism and personal preference.

And the tribalism centers on which pastor they like to listen to and they want to follow. It's a popularity contest based on preaching preferences.

Christians are arguing with one another about who is the best preacher in their church and it's dividing the community. All of them have their own opinions and are making those opinions known and they're actually fighting with each other over it.

[ 6 : 12 ] That's the problem. Christian tribalism. Christians in conflict with one another centered around allegiance to certain leaders in the church. We see this in churches today all the time.

We have Lutherans who follow Luther. We have Roman Catholics who follow the Pope. We have Pentecostals who follow the Spirit. We have some Anglicans who follow the culture. Other Anglicans who claim to follow the Bible.

Still others who are following the great tradition of ancient churches. And still another group who are trying to follow all at the same time. In Vancouver, Christians argue about which church is the best.

Which preacher is the best. Which music is the best. Which community is the best. We quarrel about which church follows the Bible the most faithfully. We divide over everything, don't we?

The role of women in leadership. How old someone should be before they're baptized and how much water is required. We divide over political leanings, over wealth and class and social status.

[ 7 : 16 ] We divide over sexual ethics and our various affirmations and prohibitions. We divide over what kind of music we like on Sundays. We divide over what clothing our pastors wear, our buildings and our budgets, about whether we exist to please our elders or attract and retain the young.

We argue, we quarrel, we publicly debate and we denounce each other. We split from our old church communities and then we start new ones full of people who think just like us.

Until they don't. And then we split again and start a new one. As Christians, we have divided ourselves over almost everything. And it's to our shame.

And so Paul appeals to us in verse 10 that we agree, that we are one. One in speech, one in mind, one in opinion.

Do not be divided. But how? How do we get along when we don't agree? How can we think the same when you like the guitar and I like the organ?

[ 8 : 23 ] When one of us wants our church to reach young people and someone else wants it to care for the elderly and those in need? How can we agree on everything? Especially when we're a community as diverse as the one in Corinth.

And we are. So that's the problem. There's division in the church. Now what's the solution? Look again at verse 10.

I appeal to you, brothers and sisters, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be united in the same mind and the same judgment.

Did you catch the basis for Paul's appeal to unity? Listen again. Third time's the charm. I appeal to you. My family in faith, my sisters and my brothers.

How? By the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. The basis, the foundation upon which our unity lies is in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

[ 9 : 30 ] We are not united by our race, by our age, by our denomination, by our sexual orientation, or status, or income, or upbringing, or worldview, or politics.

We're not united by our preachers, by their eloquence, or their wisdom, or their insight. We are united, Paul says, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

That's the basis for all Christian unity. Our unity with one another flows from our unity with him. There are two words Paul uses to describe Jesus.

And these two words form the foundation of all Christian unity. These two words for Jesus basically sum up the Christian gospel. And the words are Lord and Christ.

Words we hear all the time in church. Jesus is our Lord, and Jesus is the Christ. That's the basis for all Christian unity.

[ 10 : 33 ] If we disagree on this, we won't agree on anything. Okay, let's see quickly how this works. First, Jesus is our Lord. The word Lord means master.

Jesus is your master if you're a Christian. You are submitting yourself willingly, joyfully to him and to his will. To follow Jesus means you confess that Jesus is your Lord.

He's your master. You're his student and his servant. But Lord doesn't just mean master. In the Bible, it's also the title we reserve for God himself.

Throughout the Bible and in the English language, Lord refers to God. Lord is a divine title. The Lord is God. In ancient times when the Bibles were being copied by hand, scribes would write out the Holy Scriptures.

And when they came upon God's name, they wouldn't write it out in full. Instead, they'd write the first and last letter of God's name and they'd write a line on the top as shorthand to tell the reader that the name is God's name but I'm not holy enough to write it out in full.

[ 11 : 45 ] They had this little code. So in English, instead of writing out God, G-O-D, you would write the first letter G, the last letter D, and you'd write and you'd write a line on top. Or if you're writing out Lord, you'd write L-D with a line on top.

Well, if you look at the earliest copy we have of 1 Corinthians, it's written on this cool papyrus paper. You can look this up online. It's as old as the second century A.D.

so it could be a copy 50 years after Paul wrote it. And you see in this verse, verse 10, and throughout the letter whenever Jesus' name is written, the scribes use that same divine shorthand. They don't write out Jesus' name. They don't write out Lord Jesus Christ. They write L-D with a line on the top, J-S with a line on the top, C-T with a line on the top to tell the reader they're talking about God.

Jesus is Lord. He is God himself. And knowing that Jesus is God is what unites us.

[ 12 : 52 ] Our unity is based on the name of our Lord Jesus because Jesus is God. A Christian is one who follows Jesus because they know that Jesus is God.

He is the Lord. Look back at Jesus' prayer in John 17 where we started. Jesus prays for his followers. He says, Holy Father, keep them in your name which you have given me that they may be one even as we are one.

Jesus in his prayer tells us that God has given Jesus his name. God shares his divine name with Jesus. And this means that Jesus is God just as the Father is God.

They share the same name and so they're perfectly one. And in the same way all of us who believe in Jesus are one in him. Jesus is our Lord.

That's the first basis of our unity. If you believe Jesus is God then you and I are one in him. We share one faith. We are members, we just said, of one holy apostolic church.

[ 14 : 05 ] Global church. And therefore, we must not argue with each other. The second word that follows Jesus' name is in verse 10. That's the word Christ.

Christ is a Greek word. I don't know why we don't translate it in our English Bibles. It means king. It means God's chosen king. The king of the kingdom of heaven.

The Messiah. The one who like a son of man was presented before God and given all authority and glory and power that he may be worshipped by all the nations. So Jesus is God and Jesus is heaven's king.

He's the king of the kingdom of heaven and he is our Lord. So we are his subjects. Citizens of his kingdom. If you believe Jesus is your Lord and is the Christ then you and I are one in him.

We are united by him into the family of God. In the church I grew up at our regional leader, our bishop, did not believe that Jesus was Lord.

[ 15 : 13 ] He didn't believe that Jesus was the Christ. Now I'm not saying this to cause division or to give you my opinion of this person. This bishop actually wrote a book about it.

He gave a sermon on it at St. John's on an Easter Sunday when I was a child. He saw Jesus as an interesting teacher and a role model for all of us but nothing more.

Certainly not risen from the dead. Certainly not God incarnate. And the position of this one leader tore our national church in half. And to this day there's been no reconciliation.

Because the basis for Christian unity is our Lord Jesus Christ. If you do not agree on who Jesus is then we won't agree on anything else.

But if we are one in seeing Jesus as our Lord and our Christ then we can have unity and peace in him. Now some of you tonight may be visiting us.

[ 16 : 17 ] Or maybe even you're shopping for a new church. Maybe this is your first church ever. And I'm not going to give you the sales pitch on why you should join St. John's and why we're better than everyone else.

But what I am going to say is that when you choose a church to be your home the single most important thing is that the community you join worships and obeys Jesus as Lord and Jesus as the Christ.

That's what it means to be a Christian. That is the basis for our unity. unity. Everything else is secondary to him. So Paul's appeal to unity is founded upon Jesus as our Lord and our Christ. But even if you agree on that Christians sometimes still disagree don't we? Even if we can agree that Jesus is our Lord and our Christ we still squabble.

So how can we access God's power to be one in Jesus in the midst of division and quarreling? Look down at verse 17 of our text.

[ 17 : 26 ] For Christ did not send me to only baptize but to preach the gospel and not with words of eloquent wisdom lest the cross of Christ be emptied of its power.

Look at what he now says in verse 18. For the word of the cross is folly to those who are perishing but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.

Paul doesn't appeal to eloquent words of worldly wisdom to promote peace and spread the gospel and neither should we. If our faith is based solely on the brilliant words of human preachers then our faith will be susceptible to fail when these human leaders do.

The power of God to unite his people is not found in eloquent words of wisdom but instead in the word of the cross. Do you believe that?

We could have the best preachers in the world maybe we do but their sermons will not do anything to bring people to Jesus without the word of the cross. It's the cross of Christ proclaimed that unleashes the power of God and unifies God's church.

[ 18 : 38 ] This is the gospel this is the message that contains within it the power of God for the salvation of everyone. It's the announcement that Jesus is God and Jesus is God's king and the way Jesus revealed who he is is by dying on a Roman cross.

Jesus is God and Jesus as God gave his life for us. He died the death we deserve submitting to death on a cross to forgive us our sin and save us from God's judgment.

And because he willingly did this God raised him proving to us that Jesus is who he said he was and that his death worked to bring life and salvation.

It's the word of the cross that is the gospel of Jesus Christ and it contains in it the power of God to save everyone who believes in it and unite them to one another and to Christ forever.

And there's irony here because the message of the cross sounds like such foolishness. The message sounds ridiculous. It's embarrassing.

[ 19 : 49 ] It makes the Lord look so weak and pathetic. Our senior pastor here says no one would make this up. This is not the faith you would conceive of to try and trick people because it's so ridiculous and pathetic that God would willingly die.

But it's in this apparent weakness that the power of God is unleashed. It's through the death of our Lord Jesus Christ that his life is offered to all. It's through the hatred of his merciless execution that the love of God is put on full display.

At the cross the wisdom of the world is turned on its head. We see at the cross that what matters is not eloquence or impressiveness but love. Love expressed by sacrificing yourself to save and to serve others.

At the cross God gave himself for us. God the son endured the punishment we deserve so that we might receive the life he enjoys. At the cross sinners are made saints.

Violence gives way to peace. Judgment yields grace. And death births life. The cross subverts all of our worldly wisdom and it shows us the beauty of God through his self-sacrificial love.

[ 21 : 10 ] And it's the preaching of the word of the cross that unleashes the power of God on the earth. Yes, this message will be seen as utter foolishness to those who are perishing, to the worldly wise.

But to us who are being saved, we see in the cross the power of God to save and unite a broken world. The Corinthian church was divided and divisive and dominated by arguments and quarrels over who is the greatest.

And Paul points out their problem and then points them to Jesus reminding them that he is our Lord and our Christ. He is our God and our King. He is the basis of our unity.

Paul contrasts the wisdom of the world with the foolishness of the cross, showing how the cross has revealed the power of God for the salvation of the whole world. A church community that is fully committed to our Lord Jesus Christ and proclaiming his cross will not be divided and will not be occupied with quarreling and conflict.

It will be a church that exhibits the power of God, the love of God, and looks to proclaim the gospel of God centered on the cross of Christ. Christ. So in Jesus' name, let us be one, even as he is one.

[ 22 : 32 ] Amen.